Postgraduate Information Session

Eric Martin

School of Computer Science and Engineering
University of New South Wales
Sydney, Australia

14.02.2019

Welcome to CSE!

Congratulations for your admission to one of the CSE postgraduate coursework programs.

Purpose of this session:

- Provide you with information and advice
- Answer questions you might have
- Let you start socialising, interacting
- Enjoy pizzas and drinks

UNSW Terminology (1)

You are enrolled in a **program**, such as:

- Program 7543, aka Graduate Certificate in Computing
- Program 5543, aka Graduate Diploma in Information Technology
- Program 8543, aka Master of Information Technology.

Programs take a number of **sessions**, now **trimesters**, to complete and award you a **degree**.

Programs are refined into **specialisations**, or **streams**, or **majors** (frowned upon), kind of degree "colouring":

- The Graduate Certificate has no specialisation.
- Both the Graduate Diploma and the Master have the same specialisations, one of which is the "default specialisation", equivalent to no specialisation.

At most one (nondefault) specialisation can be acknowledged in your **testamur**.

UNSW Terminology (2)

Each session, you will enrol in a number of **courses** (neither "subjects" nor "papers") such as COMP9020 Foundations of Computer Science.

With **full load**, you complete 3 courses per trimester. That is your only option if you are an international student, unless you are in your last trimester and have fewer courses to complete your degree, or unless a case can be made to **reduce study load**, which needs approval. There are very rare circumstances where you might be allowed to **overload**, but it is almost always a bad decision followed by detrimental consequences.

Being enrolled in 2 or 3 courses per trimester, you are a **full-time student**.

Being enrolled in 1 course per trimester, you are a **part-time student**.

UNSW Terminology (3)

Each course is worth a number of **UOC**'s, aka **Units Of Credit**, a multiple of 6, equal to 6 for most courses.

Completing a degree means collecting enough UOC's, together with satisfying a number of extra conditions such as completing **core** courses, as opposed to **elective** courses.

The arithmetic mean of all marks (out of 100) that you scored in all courses you enrolled in up to the end of a trimester, including any course your failed, even if you took it again and passed it, is your **WAM** (Weighted Average Mark) for that session, and eventually for the degree. To some employers, for some jobs, WAM matters a lot, and makes your degree all the more valuable that it is higher.

Recognition of prior knowledge

Credit Transfer / *Advanced Standing* (same meaning) should be done PRIOR to commencing your studies.

In case you think you are eligible for Credit Transfer and wish to apply for it, then do it AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

A Google search with the keywords `CSE + "advanced standing"` returns as first link the right page, with all relevant information on how to proceed:

https://www.engineering.unsw.edu.au/postgraduate-recognition-of-prior-learning

Articulation

- From Graduate Certificate to Graduate Diploma:

  No Fail or a WAM of 70
- From Graduate Certificate to Masters:

  A WAM of 75
- From Graduate Diploma to Masters:

  No Fail or a WAM of 75

The rules are STRICT. In case you are determined to articulate but realise by census date that you are likely not to meet the requirements, then consider reducing study load.

Census date (1)

A VERY IMPORTANT DATE! MARCH 17

Deadline to drop a course without losing your fees for the course.

- Beware that if you are not meeting expectations by week 4, things are most likely to get WORSE. BE LUCID!
- Beware of casual work. Dropping casual work might be an alternative. Most likely, casual work won't bring you enough money to offset the costs of having to study one extra session, having to pay again for any course you fail.

Census date (2)

A VERY IMPORTANT DATE! MARCH 17

Often, we need to try things out to find out whether they are good for us, are consistent with our strengths, are aligned with our aims.

It is fine when things do not work as expected, that is life. But it is important to ACKNOWLEDGE it, and THE EARLIER, the BETTER.

If that is the case, the best time is by census date; better than end of first session; which is still better than end of second session; which is still "better" (rather, not as bad) as end of third session...

You need two things

PASSION, or at least STRONG INTEREST

EXCELLENT RESULTS, or at least GOOD RESULTS

The value of your degree, hence the quality of your first and possibly subsequent jobs, significantly depends on your academic results.

We want you to thrive, we hope you will thrive, we will help you to thrive. Just that IT studies, like any kind of studies, are for some people and not for others...

Pieces of advice (1)

As far as delivering contents is concerned, we could have sessions that are 2 weeks long.

The bottleneck is not in teaching, but in learning, because we saturate, because there is only so much we can learn in one day.

So essential to:

- Know/Feel how much can be effectively learnt in one day
- Make sure that much is learnt in one day, every day: study enough
- Be satisfied that you have learnt today what you can reasonably learn today: study in right amounts.

Pieces of advice (2)

Study in CHUNKS of the right duration, strategically maximise the number of chunks you can allocate for effective learning.

- Building confidence feeling that every days brings its own achievements, will have a strong positive effect.
- Do NOT study madly on some days and study nothing on others.
- Do NOT "prepare for the exams" a few days or weeks before they take place. Just regularly master the material.

Pieces of advice (3)

You are physically at University (as opposed to doing an online degree) to INTERACT and get SUPPORT.

Create, seize every opportunity you can for both! In particular:

- Most courses have a **forum** or **message board**. Use it to post questions of interest to everyone and help other fellow students by answering questions they asked.
- Go to consultation, not only to get help with assessments, but also to get feedback on your work, clarify parts of the course material...

Try and MINIMISE USE OF EMAIL, really so for all matters that are of interest to other students where forum/message board are much more appropriate mediums of communication.

Also, first LOOK FOR INFORMATION (e.g., in course outlines) before you ask for it.

Breadth and Depth

IT is a discipline with many fields.

- Professionally, it is good to have a decent understanding of the concepts and techniques developed in most major areas, of course together withe more specific knowledge and skills in one or two specialised fields.
- Academically, it is good to EXPLORE, going for breadth, and having found out or confirmed that this or that area is best for you, go for depth.
- You cannot complete the degree without both significant breadth and significant depth. So be open enough, especially in the first half of your studies.

MIT program constraints (1)

- 5 courses are core.
  - COMP9021 Principles of Programming and GSOE9820 Project Management have no pre-requisite
  - COMP9311 Database Systems has COMP9021 as co-requisite
  - COMP9024 Data Structures & Algorithms has COMP9021 as pre-requisite
  - COMP9331 Computer Networks &Applications has COMP9024 as co-requisite
  - COMP9900 Info Tech Project, or one of the two research project courses COMP9596 and COMP9945 (WAM of 75 required) should be done in last semester (COMP9900) or last 2 semesters (COMP9596 or COMP9945)

Make sure you list the courses that are of potential interest to you as a graph that shows the dependencies (contraints of pre-reqs and co-reqs) to help planning.

MIT program constraints (2)

The most stringent constraint: complete 6 ADKs ("Advanced Disciplinary Knowledge" courses).

- Try and take some in third trimester (still, only if there are appropriate options).
- Beware that some have COMP9020 Foundations of Computer Science as a pre-requisite (in particular, COMP9417 Machine Learning).

Specialisations bring their own constraints. They are optional. For most of them, you will satisfy the requirements by just, after initial exploration, taking more courses in areas you are most interested and perform best in.

If you feel a course would be particularly interesting but you can't take it because you have to take another course and satisfy the requirements of a specialisation, consider forgetting about the specialisation...

MIT program freedom (1)

Take at most 2 courses from a list of APPROVED non-CSE electives, specific courses coming from

- the School of Electrical Engineering & Telecommunications
- the School of Civil and Environmental Engineering
- the School of Mathematics & Statistics
- the UNSW Business School

Some specialisations, most notably Data Science and Engineering, let you take other non-CSE courses besides the at most 2 non-CSE courses you can elect.

MIT program freedom (2)

Having to complete 16 courses, you are likely to have

- one session with only 1 course,
- or two sessions with only 2 courses — probably best.

It is worth considering taking only 2 courses in first session, right now or at least by census date. The first session might be the most challenging:

- You need to understand "the rules of the game"
- You might need to adapt to a new education system, a variety of accents...
- You need to build confidence
- You need all aspects of your life to be well organised, stable
- If you are new computing, building the foundations can be the most time consuming, before it becomes more of the same...

A few useful things to do (1)

Install the UNSW Uni-Verse (marketing at its best) app on your smartphone... but cut down on the time you spend on your smartphone...

Bookmark in your browser all pages you will constantly visit, most notably, the homepages of the courses you are enrolled in.

Usually,

`https://www.cse.unsw.edu.au/~cs`*dddd*

takes you there, or to a page with a link to get you there.

In any case, a Google search will give you the answer, once and for all if you bookmark...

A few useful things to do (2)

Vlab is software that gives you access to a CSE lab computer on your own desktop, laptop computer, tablet or smartphone.

A Google search with the keywords `CSE` + `vlab` returns as first link a page that lets you use the service, still not in the best, most stable way:

`https://vlabgateway.cse.unsw.edu.au`

There, clicking on one of the proposed resolutions takes you to a page that in the top right corner, mentions another page:

`http://taggi.cse.unsw.edu.au/Vlab`

where you find all instructions to what to install, what to do to connect in the best way.

A few useful things to do (3)

In particular, Vlab lets you become familiar with the computing environment of the CSE labs, but of course you should also spend time in those, you will then feel more comfortable when you take practical exams...

Totally unrelated to Vlab... You should know where the Faculty Student Services are (building J17, first floor) to get help and resolve any admin issue you have. If you have not been there already, check out where it is, before you need it...